

**Puerto Rico Solid Waste Management Plan
Response to RA's November 2, 2005 Letter to
Honorable Governor Anibel Acevedo Vila**

RA's Talking Points:

- We requested, by December 30, 2005, a copy of Puerto Rico's most current Solid Waste Management Plan, in English, and associated specific, detailed financing plans needed to implement the Plan.
- On March 1, 2006, Dr. Javier Quintana-Mendez, Executive Director of the Solid Waste Management Authority, transmitted an English version of the ***Solid Waste Management Strategic Plan for Puerto Rico***. This Strategic Plan was published in August 2003, and was declared as public policy for Puerto Rico on July 26, 2004.
- EPA commends the Commonwealth for its approach to integrated solid waste management, and for its strategic vision and action to promote source reduction and recycling, as reflected in its adoption of the ***Strategic Plan*** as public policy.
- On March 1, 2006, Dr. Quintana-Mendez also transmitted a separate document, ***Solid Waste Management Plan Summary of Actions***. The ***Summary of Actions*** identifies other initiatives that the Authority has carried out to reach its goals, including a waste characterization study, and a Landfill Reaching Capacity study, which addresses closure of the landfills. We now request a complete copy of the Landfill Reaching Capacity study, in English.
- The Authority's ***Summary of Actions*** also referenced two items that EPA believes are critical to the Commonwealth's challenge of effective solid waste management. These are:
 - a ***Preliminary Project Schedule***, which proposed locations and expected timeframes for completing or constructing landfill expansions, transfer stations, and materials recovery facilities, and composting plants, and
 - a ***Dynamic Programmatic Implementation Plan***, a 25-year plan tied to short, mid and long-term goals, that would be updated every 5 years, that will provide the framework for long-term implementation and financing.
- EPA challenges the Commonwealth to move as expeditiously as possible toward the development of the ***Dynamic Programmatic Implementation Plan***, or "Master Plan".
- EPA needs assurance from the Commonwealth that this "Master Plan" will clearly identify solid waste management infrastructure needs, landfill siting criteria, specific financing mechanisms for both capital and operational costs, and associated schedules.

- We also requested that, by March 1, 2006 the Governor host a series of meetings among the solid waste management community on the current Solid Waste Management Plan, and on Operation Compliance.
- We've been informed that the Commonwealth in the process of developing an outreach plan and schedule, and will provide it to EPA as soon as it is completed sometime in March. The Commonwealth also identified several outreach meetings held prior to our request.

Background:

- With respect to the EPA's November 2, 2005 letter from EPA R2 RA Alan J. Steinberg to PR Governor Acevedo Vila and EPA's six expectations which were explained in an enclosure to that letter, the first two pertained to the Solid Waste Management Plan.

Expectation 1 - Solid Waste Management Plan:

- EPA requested an English translation of PR's most current Solid Waste Management Plan and associated financing mechanisms, funding sources, and a schedule for obtaining such financing.
- In a telephone conversation on February 1, with the DRA, SWMA confirmed that it would send a translated copy of its "Strategic Plan for the Management of Solid Residues in Puerto Rico," dated August 2004 which is the most recent of several solid waste management studies and comprehensive reports that PR has produced over the past several years. As requested, PR provided the requested English translation of this *Strategic Plan* on March 1.
- This document was completed and signed into law in 2004. Much of the data used to complete this plan was derived from PR's comprehensive 2003/2004 Waste Characterization Study which EPA endorsed and partially funded. This plan serves to supplement existing solid waste management plans and to reaffirm and strategically implement what Puerto Rico considers its priority areas- source reduction, and recycling with the attendant infrastructure development, market development, and citizen participation.
- The *Strategic Plan* includes detailed budget information, as well as public outreach related to this plan. It does not include funding mechanisms or schedules for this plan.
- The *Strategic Plan* does not address, nor was it intended to address, landfill compliance issues and open dump closures. These issues are addressed in existing documents, such as its 1991 "Regional Site Facility Plan" and its 1995 "Regional Plan for the Infrastructure for Recycling and the Disposal of Solid Waste in Puerto Rico." The foundation of the 1995 landfill placement plan was the systematic exclusion of places termed inadequate (areas of exclusion), and the

incorporation of systems source reduction and recycling systems which continues to be used as a reference for planning and placement of new projects.

- The ***Strategic Plan*** was accompanied by an additional key document, entitled “Solid Waste Management Authority Summary of Actions” which summarizes PR’s recent activities (during the past three years) and discusses the results of PR’s comprehensive Waste Characterization Study, and the results of a separate study produced by consultants Vincent y Heres y Lauria and Malcolm Pirnie (VHL/MP) entitled, “Evaluation, Diagnosis and Recommendations for Landfill System in Puerto Rico (Landfill Reaching Capacity)”. We are now requesting a copy of this study.
- Also included in the ***Summary of Actions*** is summary of conclusions from meetings with municipalities, a preliminary schedule for closure of several existing landfills, expansion of other existing landfills, and establishment of new materials recovery and composting facilities, and a summary and status of the Compliance Operation Program jointly implemented by EQB and SWMA. Although financing mechanism information was not provided, it appears PR provided much of the requested information and satisfied a majority of the expectation.
- The ***Summary of Actions*** also defines a 25-year master planning effort, called a ***Dynamic Programming Implementation Plan***. The “Master Plan”, as we call it, will tie all of these public policy actions, studies, project schedules, and financing plans together. EPA believes it can be most effective if we work with the Commonwealth to ensure the various required planning components are captured within this master planning effort.

Expectation 2 - Outreach on Solid Waste Management Plan:

- EPA requested that PR host meetings among the municipalities and private entities to discuss PR’s current Solid Waste Management Plan and its Operation Compliance. PR is in the process of developing an outreach plan and schedule and will provide it to EPA as soon as it is completed sometime in March.
- However, while the ***Summary of Actions*** did not mention any meetings held since receipt of the RA’s November 3, 2005 letter, the letter did discuss several meetings which were held from June 6-17, 2005 in which Puerto Rico discussed regulatory compliance, progress reports, environmental improvements with each of the municipalities.

Desired Outcome:

- Continued progress and dialogue on effective solid waste management planning efforts.

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